By
MIKE W. BARR
ADAM HUGHES
RICK MAGYAR

Full-Color Series

$2.50 U.S./$3.10 Can.

Special Issue!

Here are *Jennifer Mays*, New York's prettiest detective, and *Gabriel Webb*, true crime writer. Join them in another fair-play whodunit -- a challenge to *you* to solve the mystery as it unfolds!

LAST ISSUE: It seemed like an old O. Henry Christmas story all over again -- but, in the midst of it all, Jennifer inscribed her feelings for Gabe on the back of his watch: "To Gabe, 12/25/89. I love you, always." It was a turning point in their relationship.

THIS ISSUE: In "Murderer's Mask," a porcelain death mask of a beautiful woman, long dead, leads to attempted murder -- *and* to the cavernous mansion of a reclusive billionaire. It's sex, murder, money, and mystery in an *EXTRA-LONG* story lovingly illustrated by *Adam Hughes* for this special issue!

Shock Follows Shock
As Death
Stalks The Night!

INNOVATION™

No One Moves From California To West Virginia, Do They?

David Campiti knows just what buttons to push. In fact, some people still wonder just what David said that got me to leave a comfortable position as Sales Manager and Editor of Viz Comics (you know...they do the manga stuff) and travel cross-country to cold and snowy West Virginia to become Innovation's Marketing Director and Consulting Editor, even for a short time.

"More money?" asked some. Nope, not even a consideration.

"Leaving a troubled home life?" others implied. Not even close! Those out there who know me *know* that I'm truly one of the most happily married men on the planet.

"He's holding your wife hostage?" the more demented asked. Not even close to true.

"So why?"

Well, I'll tell you. I came to Innovation for the opportunity to work on some of the best books in the industry. It's just that simple.

"We do full-color books," David said.

"C-Color," I stammered, trying not to seem anxious.

"We publish ***THE MAZE AGENCY***," he stated.

"T-The mystery b-book with just a tinge of humor by Mike Barr...?" I said, hoping David didn't realize that I normally don't stutter. And my voice didn't normally crack this way...honest.

"And ***HERO ALLIANCE*** [a book I have fantasies about working on], ***LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS*** [a book I have fantasies about], ***Alex Nino's NIGHTMARE*** [***the*** Alex Nino, master of the bizarre?], and ***NEWSTRALIA*** [the fast-paced action/adventure of life in the future wastelands of Australia?]."

"So?" I retorted, trying to sound nonchalant.

My feigned Devil-May-Care attitude didn't fool David; he knew he had me thinking about coming over to Innovation. He had played on my desire to be connected to some of the best material on the comic shop shelf and was dangling some of my personal favorites as bait. Now it was time to reel me in.

"Oh," David added, turning my nonchalance back at me, "did I mention ***Anne Rice's THE VAMPIRE LESTAT***?"

"I'm on my way!"

And that's how I came to be at Innovation, right now, waiting for my wife Sabrina to firm up her plans for where she's going to work out her college practicals. The opportunity to jump to Innovation was just too good to pass up.

But now, just what is it that I do here? Mainly, I'm to revamp the marketing plans for the company, to help you -- and the stories where you *buy* the books -- find out more about them before they're even solicited.

Long before they come out.

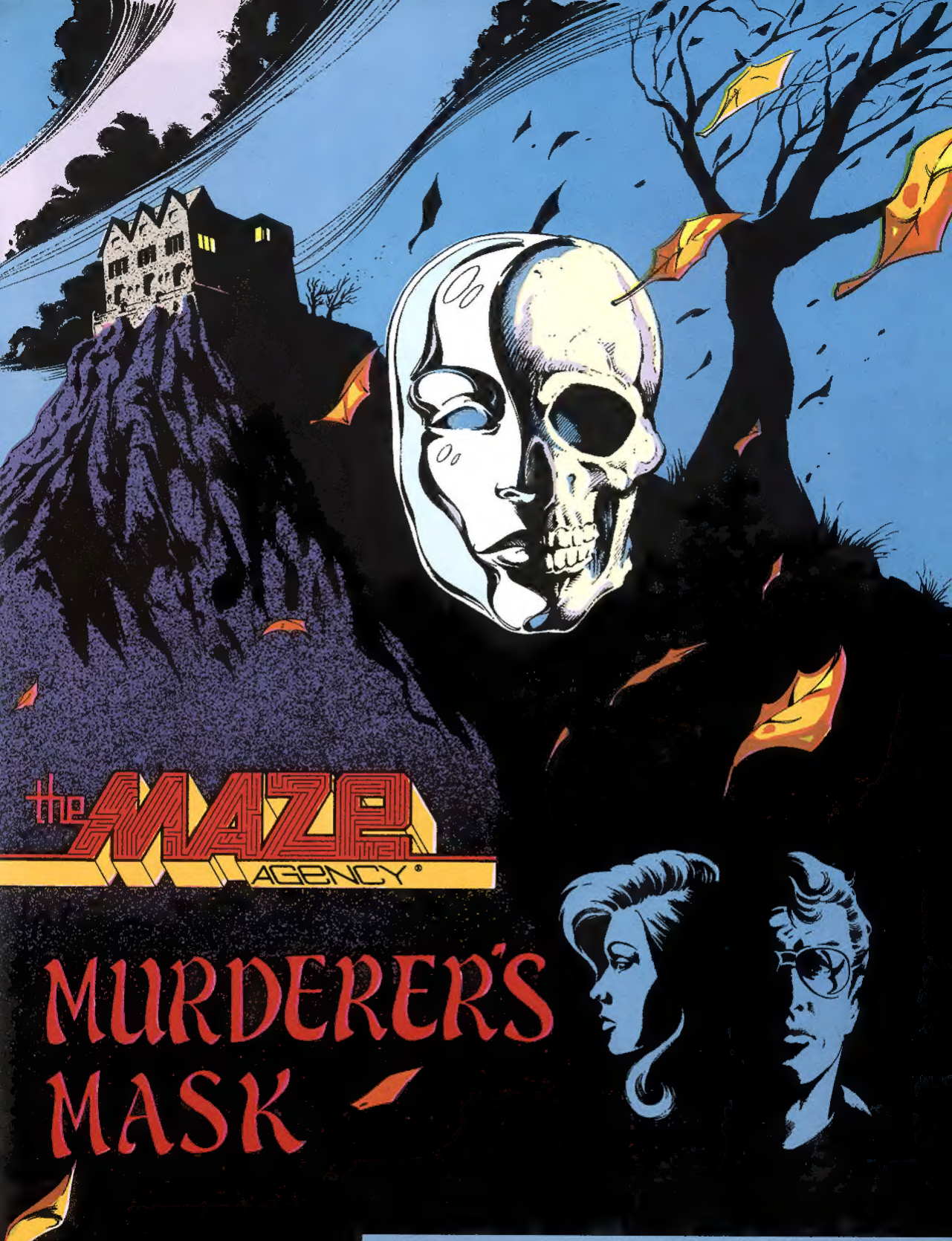
Because David, Scott, Diana, Jimmy, and a host of freelancers are too busy working on the books themselves to worry about the promotion -- integral to sales and media interest, but not as important as the actual books themselves.

I promise that my plans *may* change the way you look at comic books forever.

And Innovation's plans are to continue to give you the best possible books for your money. I think they're succeeding.

-- Jerry A. Novick
New Year's Eve, 1989

THE MAZE AGENCY®
Vol. 1, No. 12, May 1990 issue.
Published by the INNOVATIVE CORPORATION. Office of Publishing: Innovation Publishing, 3623 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, (304) 232-7701. David Campiti, President & Publisher. Diana Light, Operations Manager. Scott Rockwell, Art Director. Jerry A. Novick, Marketing Manager. Jim Elliott, Licensing Manager. Story, text & art © 1990 Mike W. Barr. Other editorial material © 1990 Innovative Corp. The MAZE Agency, Jennifer Mays, Gabriel Webb, all other prominent characters in this issue, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are © 1990 Mike W. Barr. Innovation logo and Wonder Color are TM 1990 Innovative Corp. All rights reserved. Color separations by Wonder Color, a division of the Innovative Corp. For advertising rates, or for licensing information, call (304) 232-7703. Fax #304-232-4010. Printed by Boyd Press.
It's an Innovation Publication!



the MAZE AGENCY®

MURDERER'S MASK

MIKE W. BARR
Writer/Creator

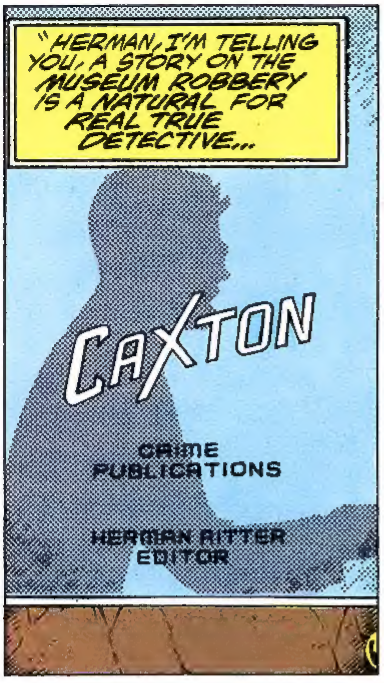
ADAM HUGHES & RICK MAGYAR
Artists

TOM ADDIS
Letterer

SUSAN GLOD
Colorist

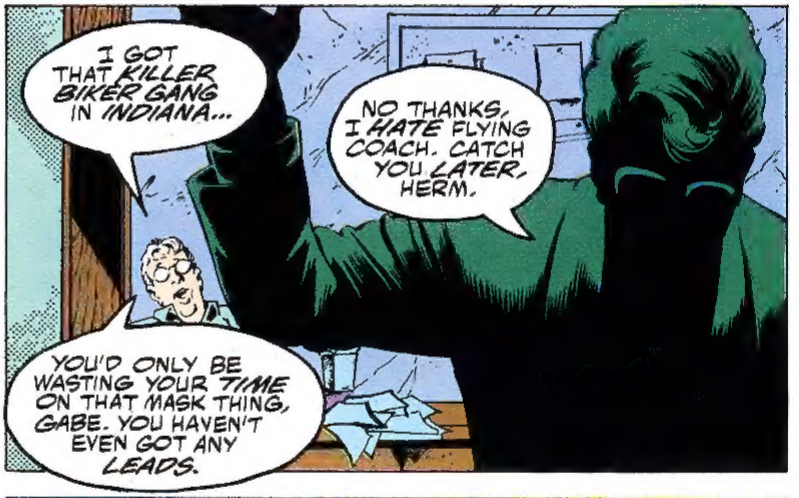
DAVID CAMPITI
Editor

WHUMM


"HERMAN, I'M TELLING YOU, A STORY ON THE MUSEUM ROBBERY IS A NATURAL FOR REAL TRUE DETECTIVE...
CAXTON
CRIME PUBLICATIONS
HERMAN RITTER EDITOR

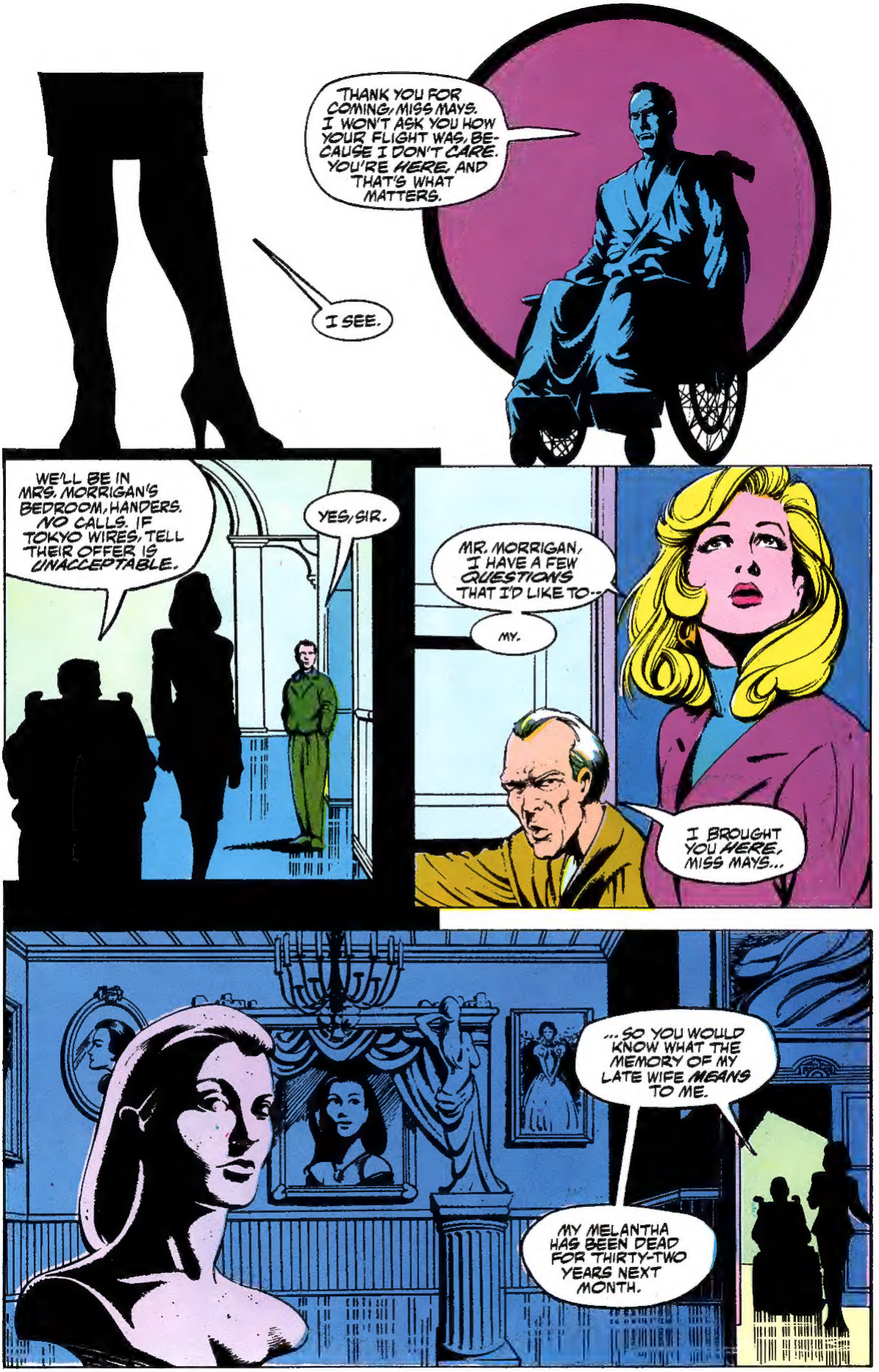
...THINK OF IT: THREE GUARDS KILLED, A MASK MADE FROM THE FACE OF A RECLUSIVE BILLIONAIRE'S LONG-DEAD WIFE... IT'S GOT EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING EXCEPT YOU, YOU MEAN, GABE. NAW, IT'S TOO INTELLECTUAL.
RADU'S CHINESE TAKE-OUT

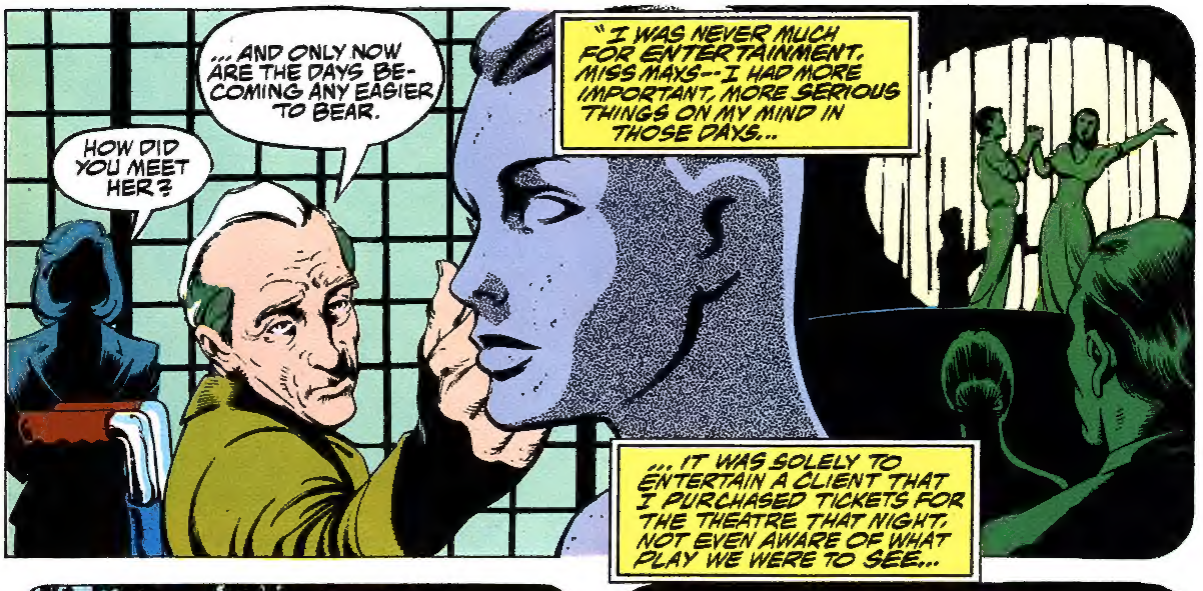
WHAT ABOUT THAT STORY ON THE CALDWELL MOTORS THEFT? THAT WAS INTELLECTUAL!
AND IT STANK ON ICE! THE READERS HATED IT!
OH.


I GOT THAT KILLER BIKER GANG IN INDIANA...
NO THANKS, I HATE FLYING COACH. CATCH YOU LATER, HERM.
YOU'D ONLY BE WASTING YOUR TIME ON THAT MASK THING, GABE. YOU HAVEN'T EVEN GOT ANY LEADS.

AS LONG AS HE'S WILLING TO PAY ME FOR COMING TO SEE HIM, TIME'S NOT AN ISSUE, MR. HANDERS.
THAT'S MR. MORRIGAN'S ESTATE BELOW, MISS MAYS. IT WON'T BE LONG NOW.

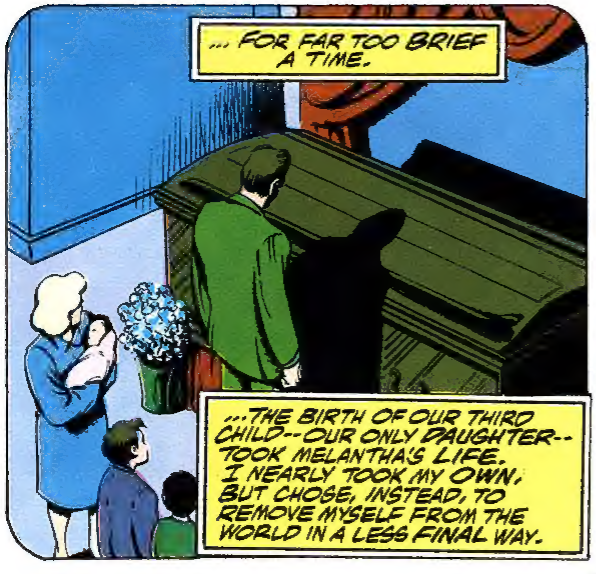
"YES, MR. MORRIGAN PAYS THE PRICE FOR HIS SECLUSIVENESS, MISS MAYS. HE'S LIVED HERE FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS, ALONE--EXCEPT FOR VARIOUS PERSONAL ASSISTANTS."
"DOESN'T HE EVER SEE HIS CHILDREN?"
"HE COMMUNICATES WITH THEM ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH BUT, NO, HE HASN'T ACTUALLY SEEN THEM IN PERSON IN YEARS--NOT IN THE FIVE YEARS I'VE BEEN WITH HIM, ANYWAY."
STOP
"MY, HE CERTAINLY DOES VALUE HIS PRIVACY."
VALUES IT AND GUARDS IT VERY JEALOUSLY.
EVERY SOURCE I COULD FIND SAYS HE'S LIVED HERE SINCE THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE. IS THAT TRUE?
I'LL LET HIM TELL YOU THAT HIMSELF, MISS MAYS.
PALM PRINT CONFIRMED. SECURITY CODE ENGAGED. ACCESS PERMITTED. YOU HAVE FIVE SECONDS TO ENTER, MARK HANDERS.
KLIKLIKLIK
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
"YOU'RE BACK, HANDERS? IT TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH! IS THAT THE DETECTIVE?"
YES, SIR, THIS IS--
I'M JENNIFER MAYS, MR. MORRIGAN.

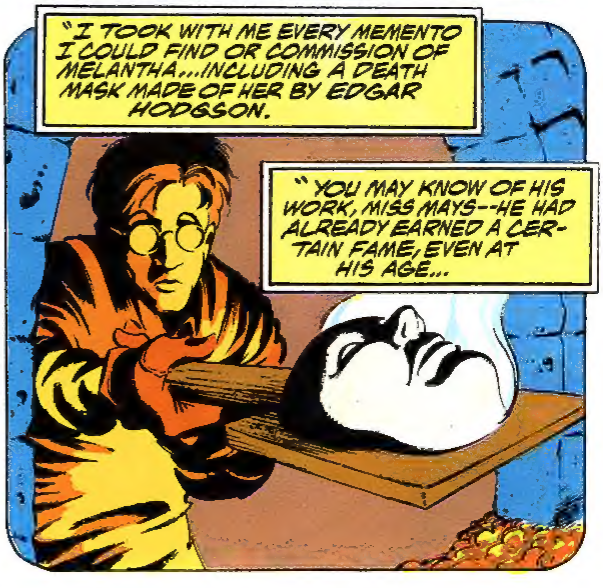

THANK YOU FOR COMING, MISS MAYS. I WON'T ASK YOU HOW YOUR FLIGHT WAS, BECAUSE I DON'T CARE. YOU'RE HERE, AND THAT'S WHAT MATTERS.
I SEE.
WE'LL BE IN MRS. MORRIGAN'S BEDROOM, HANDERS. NO CALLS. IF TOKYO WIRES, TELL THEIR OFFER IS UNACCEPTABLE.
YES, SIR.
MR. MORRIGAN, I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS THAT I'D LIKE TO--
MY.
I BROUGHT YOU HERE, MISS MAYS...
...SO YOU WOULD KNOW WHAT THE MEMORY OF MY LATE WIFE MEANS TO ME.
MY MELANTHA HAS BEEN DEAD FOR THIRTY-TWO YEARS NEXT MONTH.

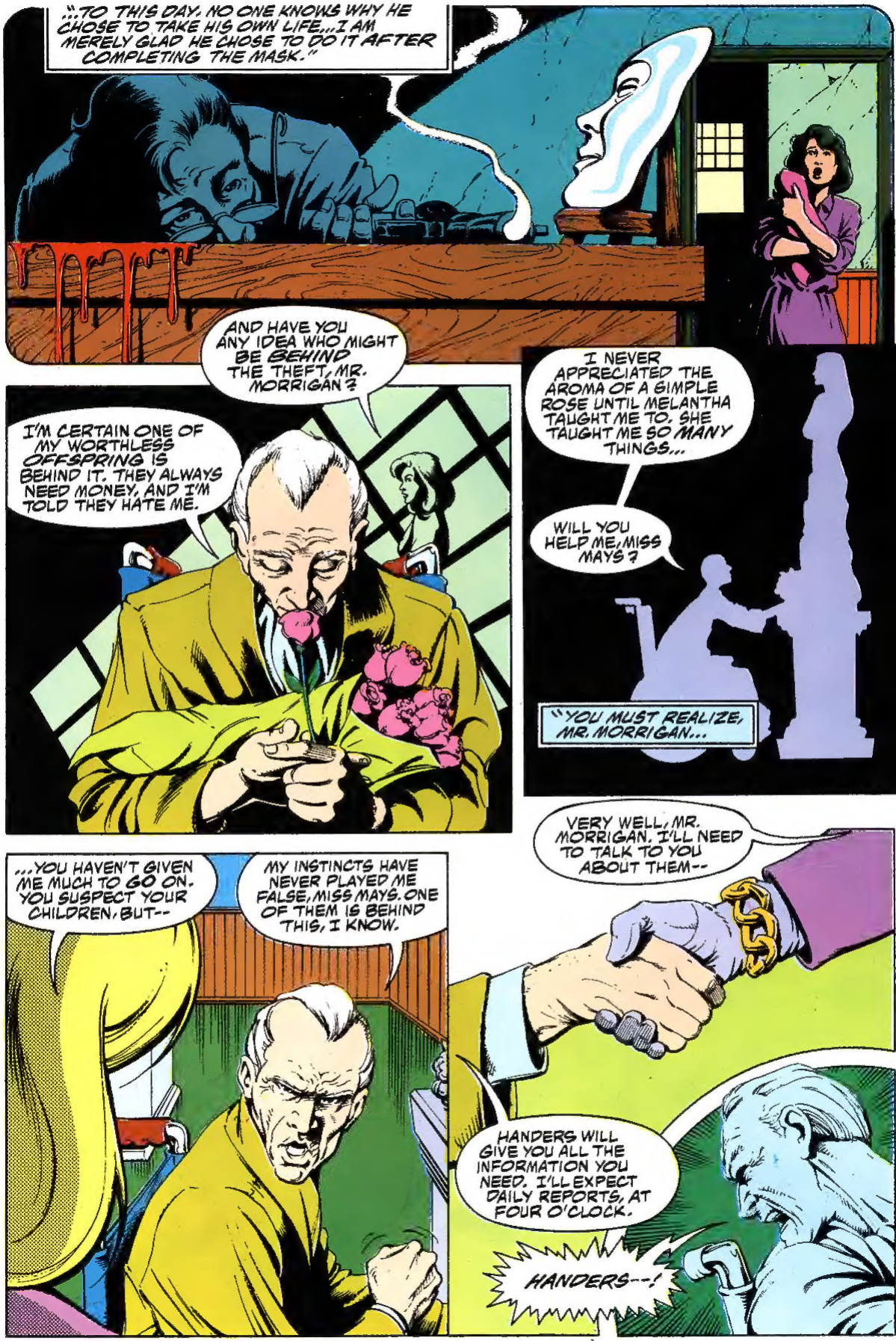

HOW DID YOU MEET HER?
... AND ONLY NOW ARE THE DAYS BECOMING ANY EASIER TO BEAR.
"I WAS NEVER MUCH FOR ENTERTAINMENT, MISS MAYS--I HAD MORE IMPORTANT, MORE SERIOUS THINGS ON MY MIND IN THOSE DAYS..
... IT WAS SOLELY TO ENTERTAIN A CLIENT THAT I PURCHASED TICKETS FOR THE THEATRE THAT NIGHT. NOT EVEN AWARE OF WHAT PLAY WE WERE TO SEE...

...BUT IT WAS ON THAT NIGHT THAT I FELL IN LOVE--FOR THE FIRST, THE ONLY TIME.

... FOR A TIME, MY LIFE WAS HAPPIER THAN I EVER KNEW IT COULD BE...


... FOR FAR TOO BRIEF A TIME.
...THE BIRTH OF OUR THIRD CHILD--OUR ONLY DAUGHTER--TOOK MELANTHA'S LIFE. I NEARLY TOOK MY OWN, BUT CHOSE, INSTEAD, TO REMOVE MYSELF FROM THE WORLD IN A LESS FINAL WAY.


"I TOOK WITH ME EVERY MEMENTO I COULD FIND OR COMMISSION OF MELANTHA...INCLUDING A DEATH MASK MADE OF HER BY EDGAR HODGSON.
"YOU MAY KNOW OF HIS WORK, MISS MAYS--HE HAD ALREADY EARNED A CERTAIN FAME, EVEN AT HIS AGE...


"...TO THIS DAY, NO ONE KNOWS WHY HE CHOSE TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE...I AM MERELY GLAD HE CHOSE TO DO IT AFTER COMPLETING THE MASK."
AND HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHO MIGHT BE BEHIND THE THEFT, MR. MORRIGAN?
I'M CERTAIN ONE OF MY WORTHLESS OFFSPRING IS BEHIND IT. THEY ALWAYS NEED MONEY, AND I'M TOLD THEY HATE ME.
I NEVER APPRECIATED THE AROMA OF A SIMPLE ROSE UNTIL MELANTHA TAUGHT ME TO. SHE TAUGHT ME SO MANY THINGS...
WILL YOU HELP ME, MISS MAYS?
"YOU MUST REALIZE, MR. MORRIGAN...
VERY WELL, MR. MORRIGAN. I'LL NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THEM--
...YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN ME MUCH TO GO ON. YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILDREN, BUT--
MY INSTINCTS HAVE NEVER PLAYED ME FALSE, MISS MAYS. ONE OF THEM IS BEHIND THIS, I KNOW.
HANDERS WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED. I'LL EXPECT DAILY REPORTS, AT FOUR O'CLOCK.
HANDERS--!

"MISS MAYS, MR. WEBB IS HERE."
SEND HIM IN, SANDY.
HI, BABE, HOW ARE--
HEY, GREAT PERFUME! IT SMELLS EXPENSIVE.
WELL, IT IS...
... BUT I CAN AFFORD IT. I'VE BEEN HIRED BY NONE OTHER THAN LEANDER MORRIGAN.
TO FIND THE MASK? I JUST PROPOSED A STORY ON THAT TO MY EDITOR. HE LOVED THE IDEA.
REALLY? AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'VE BEEN THINKING OF A WAY YOU MIGHT HELP ME, IF YOU'RE WILLING.
ANYTHING.
"ANYTHING"? MY, YOU'RE COOPERATIVE TODAY. I SHOULD HAVE BOUGHT THIS PERFUME MONTHS AGO.
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER...

from the desk of
Jennifer Mays

MAZE AGENTS

c/o Innovation Publishing, 3622 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

*We received a lot of good mail (comparatively speaking -- see below), so we'll be using some of that this month. And speaking of mail, **THE MAZE AGENCY** hasn't been getting much. Sure, there're the usual missives from old reliables like Malcolm Bourne, Galen S. West and Jacob Gilbert, but we want to hear from you other readers, too. (I know you're out there, I can hear you zip-locking your Mylars.) Consider this a request -- maybe even a plea -- for mail on the part of anyone who reads and likes **MAZE**. Heck, even if you **don't** like it, write in -- we always value mail with constructive criticism. Each and every fan letter received is read, but aging eyes are especially grateful for typed, double-spaced letters.*

--MWB

(Readers, please note that the reference to "aging eyes" refers to Mike Barr and Mr. Webb, both of whom wear glasses. My eyes are just fine, thank you very much.

--Jennifer Mays)

Dear Mike and Mike (Eury, editor emeritus):

As a long-time fan of a) Ellery Queen, b) fair-play detective stories, and c) comic books, I'm pleased to finally have found a mystery comic that allows me to indulge all three of my passions simultaneously. Congratulations on finding a new home at Innovation; I hope this means we've got many more years of stimulating crime-solving to look forward to with Jen and Gabe.

One problem, though; after having read all eight existing issues of ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** in one weekend, I find I've become head-over-heels infatuated with Jennifer Mays. And because I am, I'm dying to find out a lot more about her, such as:

1) How did she and Gabe meet, and what was their first case together?

2) How did Jen come into ownership of The Blue Ruby restaurant, and what's the story behind the place's name?

3) How did Jen become involved with the C.I.A., what did she do for them, and what led to her disillusionment with that Agency?

4) How long has Jennifer's rivalry with Ashley Swift been going on, and how did Jen clear Ashley of Mr. Swift's murder?

And most importantly:

5) Just who the heck *is* this Arthur Drogan guy, anyway? How did he die, and why does his wife blame Jen for his death?

Have mercy! I'm going nuts wondering about all this stuff! If you can't answer all these questions on the letters page, at least put this comic out faster so I don't drive myself crazy waiting to see what comes up next!

Anyway, until next issue, keep sleuthing!

Terrence Sakamoto
3880 Youngmore Rd.
Richmond, B.C., Canada

Jennifer and Gabe got very quiet when I showed them your letter, Terrence, and debated about answering it for a long time. They said questions 2-4 would probably be answered only if some new case makes it necessary for them to delve into old files. As to your other queries, Gabe said the same case would answer both questions 1 and 5. Jennifer said she wouldn't discuss it.

--MWB

Dear Mike,

Welcome back! Better late than never, and ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** is off and running at Innovation. I would hope that the vast majority of your previous readers are still aboard, and I'm sure a fair few new ones will climb on as well. And the story you opened with had all the elements of a murder mystery that you could wish for or need to make this whodunnit series attractive to anyone reading it.

The main thing is that you blend these ingredients -- introducing all the possible suspects, planting verbal and (the wonder of comics!) visual red herrings, allowing the reader to work step by step, observing Jenny and Gabe do the same -- with a continued focus on the relationship between these two sleuths, on a personal level. Now they've taken the plunge, without protracting their relationship to the point where it became impossible for them to get together, it's natural that they'd go through all the stages early romances do, including the first overnighters, attempts at cooking breakfast, etc. And you also manage to convey their feelings for each other, emotional, physical, whatever, without going over the top into soap opera realms, keeping it all

natural. For me, any comic can only work if the people at the centre are intriguing enough, and these two are certainly that.

As usual, Adam and Rick's art was stunning. Remind me to vote for Rick as best inker when the next set of awards come around. And if the pages in the latest *INNOVATION SOLICITATIONS* are indeed by Rick over Robb Phipps' pencils, it looks as if they'll also make a good team. Rick's textures are vital to the look, the feel of this book. The way he puts folds into clothing, and shadows into, well, everything, is superb. And maybe one day you'll be able to persuade Adam to fit in the occasional issue. The centrepiece, even if I'd seen it in the AIISS, was, well, a knockout!

By the way, was the victim lady in *#8* modelled on the woman in *Throw Momma From the Train*? Anyway, all you have to do now is sort out a few production problems (missed colour separations, off-centre letter column shading), and make sure the book comes out on time, and *MAZE* will rocket right up there to the top of the pile, as well as make Innovation look good!

See you in a month, I hope!

Take care,

Malcolm Bourne
Manchester, England

I asked Gabe about the resemblance of Ms. Jazmecki to "Momma;" he maintains that someone involved in casting the movie must have known Ms. Jazmecki, since she was an actual person. "Good thing she never saw Throw Momma From the Train," *said Gabe, "or she'd have probably sued them."*

--MWB

Dear Miss Mays,

I have been referred to you by a close friend who has the same concern as I do about a particular problem. This problem, I feel, needs to be investigated and I am compelled to ask for your more than capable assistance in getting to the root of my dilemma.

The success of your agency has been, on more than one occasion, called to my attention. The papers portray you as an incredibly competent investigator and I like the company you keep, not to mention your style. I am certain you will be of great service to me and others concerned with the same problem.

It seems that someone, someone quite evil, I suspect, has been sabotaging the work of many of the creative individuals behind some of my favorite comic magazines.

I first became concerned with this several months back upon discovering a series of predictable, unexciting, boring storylines within the pages of certain titles in my very own collection. I knew immediately that something must be wrong. One, maybe two dead scripts I'd believe to be a coincidental thing. But now I almost fear for the image of the industry itself. There must be some sort of devious, villainous plot behind all of this. I am truly alarmed that if nothing is done soon, nip it in the bud so to speak, stop this before it goes any further, before it's too late, I and my fellow comic readers will forever be subjected to months upon months of virtual junk.

I feel that there must be reason for this lull in the world of comics. There must be some sort of conspiracy by some fascist group of book banning anti-fun censors against the comic book medium involved in some heinous plot to shut down and eliminate producers of comics (or at least the ones good at what they do -- hmmm, maybe it's a "competitive" maneuver by one comic company to rub out another...wait, I think I'm on to something -- you know how certain talents work for more than one publisher, maybe some of these people are playing "double agent"). Do you think it is possible that this is an inside job? A frustrated assistant editor, whose story ideas have been rejected, seeking revenge? I believe you will formulate your own theories (more feasable than these, I hope).

I'm not sure how it is all being done. Regardless, we, the comic fans are suffering; some of the most recent material I've read is almost sleep inducing. Maybe, some form of hypnotism is involved!

Please consider taking this "case"; all of comicdom needs your expertise in solving this mystery.

Your prompt response is respectfully requested. Somebody is converting my favorite titles into dull mush; Maze Agency, you're my only hope.

J. Torres
Montreal, Quebec

Dear J.:

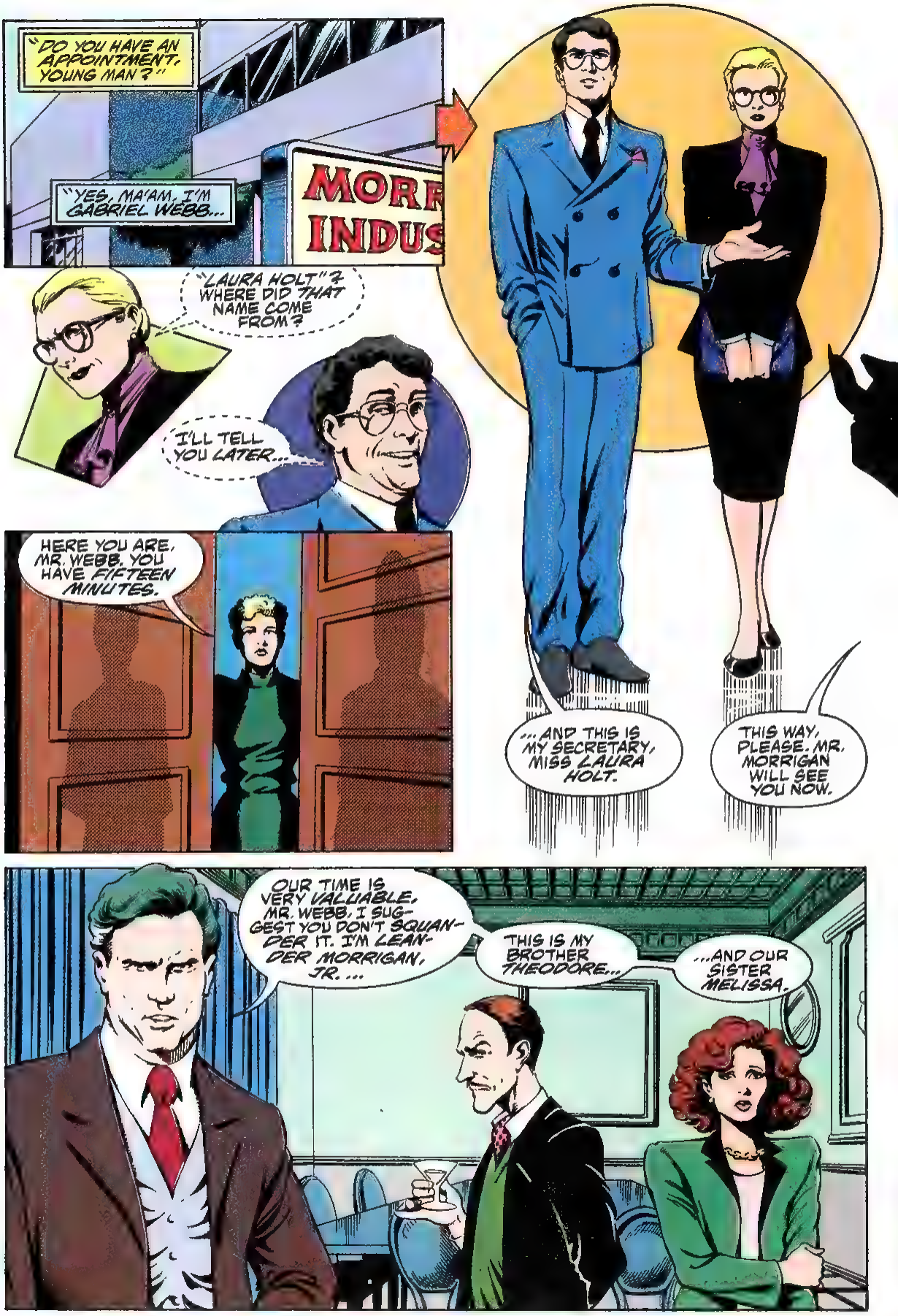
With the exception of a title called "Justice Girl," I was never much of a reader of comic books. However, based on conversations I've overheard between Mr. Webb and his friend, Lewis Brody, many comic book readers feel the same way you do. Since comic books are a commercial medium, it would seem the proper way to express your dissatisfaction would be in the marketplace. Buy those comic books you do like, and boycott those you don't, even if it means no longer purchasing a title you've been buying for years. Also, I suggest writing to the editors and executives of the companies involved. Tell them why you are buying their comics (or, more to the point, why you are not). After all, publishers won't publish comic books they can't sell. As a businesswoman, I can assure you these tactics can be quite effective.

Thank you very much for your kind words, and I hope you continue to enjoy reading **THE MAZE AGENCY.**

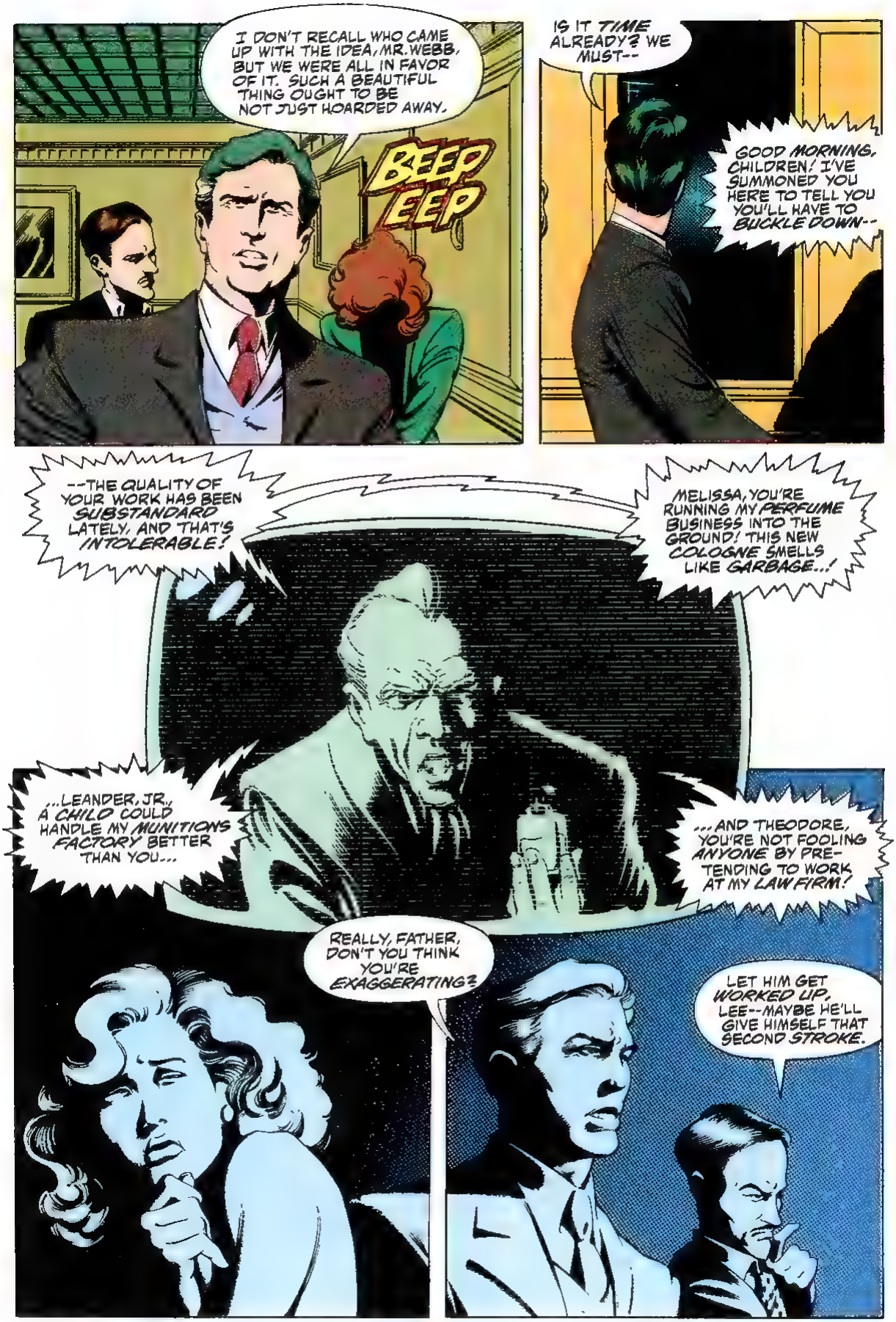
Sincerely,
Jennifer Mays

NEXT ISSUE: *The Venus deMilo has been brought to New York for a special exhibition, but before long, there are* ***two*** *Venuses around -- one of marble, and the other of flesh and blood. Why would a killer dismember and deface the corpse of his victim? That's the question Jen, Gabe and Ashley Swift race to answer in "The Adventure of the Bleeding Venus," by Robb Phipps, Rick Magyar and yours truly. Also, a* ***new character*** *joins our supporting cast, a look back at Jennifer at ten years old, and more on Jen's favorite comic, "Justice Girl!" Be here, it'll be mystifying!*

--Mike W. Barr
January 1990.


"DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT, YOUNG MAN?"
"YES, MA'AM, I'M GABRIEL WEBB..."
MORR
INDUS
"LAURA HOLT"? WHERE DID THAT NAME COME FROM?
I'LL TELL YOU LATER...
...AND THIS IS MY SECRETARY, MISS LAURA HOLT.
THIS WAY, PLEASE. MR. MORRIGAN WILL SEE YOU NOW.
HERE YOU ARE, MR. WEBB. YOU HAVE FIFTEEN MINUTES.
OUR TIME IS VERY VALUABLE, MR. WEBB. I SUGGEST YOU DON'T SQUANDER IT. I'M LEANDER MORRIGAN, JR. ...
THIS IS MY BROTHER THEODORE...
...AND OUR SISTER MELISSA.

MY BROTHER STANDS ON CEREMONY, MISS HOLT, BUT NO ONE ELSE DOES, WOULD YOU LIKE A MARTINI?
NO, THANK YOU, MR. MORRIGAN--10:30 IS A LITTLE EARLY FOR ME.
AS I TOLD YOUR SECRETARY, I'M A CRIME WRITER, MR. MORRIGAN, WORKING ON AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE THEFT OF THE--
THAT DAMN MASK AGAIN?
TED, PLEASE. IT'S FATHER'S MOST VALUED POSSESSION.
INCLUDING US! GOD FORBID HE SHOULD LOSE IT--THEN HE MIGHT HAVE TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO US THAN TO THE MEMORY OF SOME DEAD WOMAN!
HOW CAN YOU TALK ABOUT HER LIKE THAT, TED? I NEVER EVEN KNEW HER!
I'M SORRY, MELI! I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT!
I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO SEE THIS, MR. WEBB. I'LL HAVE TO INSIST THAT YOU LEAVE, AFTER ASKING YOUR QUESTIONS.
OH, SURE...
MISTER WEBB, YOU WANTED TO ASK WHOSE IDEA IT WAS TO EXHIBIT THE MASK AT THE MUSEUM, REMEMBER?
AH, YES, THANK YOU, MISS HOLT...
...WELL, MR. MORRIGAN?


I DON'T RECALL WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA, MR. WEBB, BUT WE WERE ALL IN FAVOR OF IT. SUCH A BEAUTIFUL THING OUGHT TO BE NOT JUST HOARDED AWAY.
BEEP EEP
IS IT TIME ALREADY? WE MUST--
GOOD MORNING, CHILDREN! I'VE SUMMONED YOU HERE TO TELL YOU YOU'LL HAVE TO BUCKLE DOWN--
--THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SUBSTANDARD LATELY, AND THAT'S INTOLERABLE!
MELISSA, YOU'RE RUNNING MY PERFUME BUSINESS INTO THE GROUND! THIS NEW COLOGNE SMELLS LIKE GARBAGE..!
...LEANDER, JR., A CHILD COULD HANDLE MY MUNITIONS FACTORY BETTER THAN YOU...
...AND THEODORE, YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYONE BY PRETENDING TO WORK AT MY LAW FIRM!
REALLY, FATHER, DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE EXAGGERATING?
LET HIM GET WORKED UP, LEE--MAYBE HE'LL GIVE HIMSELF THAT SECOND STROKE.

I HEARD THAT, THEODORE! SAY THAT AGAIN, AND YOU'LL BE LOOKING FOR A REAL JOB!
HANDERS? HANDERS, CAN THEY HEAR ME?
LOUD AND CLEAR, MR. M.!
STOP IT, ALL OF YOU, PLEASE! I CAN'T STAND LIVING WITH ALL THIS HATRED!
OF COURSE, MELISSA...
...PERHAPS WE'VE TALKED ENOUGH FOR TODAY. I'LL SPEAK TO EACH OF YOU SEPARATELY, NEXT WEEK.
YOU'RE STILL HERE? I'M AFRAID I MUST ASK YOU TO LEAVE.
MR. WEBB HAS HAD ALL HIS QUESTIONS ANSWERED, THANK YOU.
I DON'T THINK WE FOOLED HIM.
THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT. MORRIGAN SENIOR MAY BE RIGHT IN THINKING ONE OF THEM IS BEHIND THE THEFT.
...OR ALL OF THEM.
THAT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE, BUT UNTIL FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS OCCUR, IT'S ONLY SPECULATION. I'M JUST SORRY TO SEE A FAMILY TORN APART LIKE THAT.

FULL-COLOR POSTERS

PERFECT FOR THE NEW YEAR!

HERO ALLIANCE™
Illustrated by Ron Lim & Bill Anderson
Painted by Scott Rockwell
$4.95/Available Now!

LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS™
Illustrated by Matt Thompson & Randy Elliott
Painted by Scott Rockwell
$4.95/Available Now!

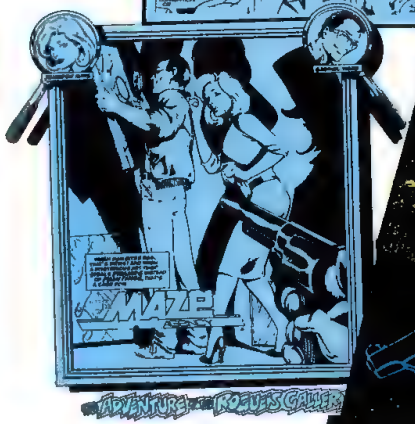
the MAZE AGENCY®

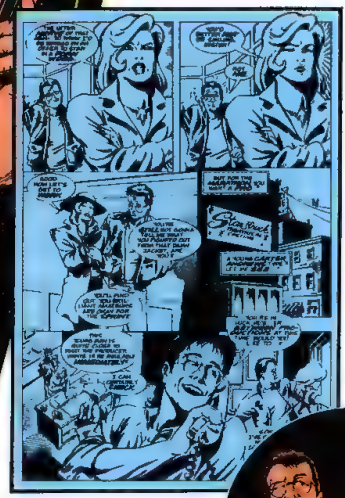
Four terrific tales by
Mike W. Barr
Adam Hughes
Rick Magyar

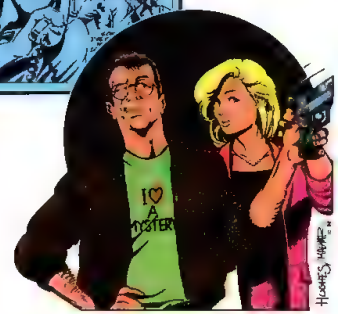
Plus:
A Special Comics
Convention Crime...
"Murder In Mint Condition!"

Bonus New Adam Hughes
artwork and cover!

The Comics
Mystery Book
Of The Year
Is On Sale Now!







MAZE BOOK:
THE MAZE AGENCY® COLLECTION #1
132 pages -- perfect bound trade paperback
$10.95 U.S./$13.95 Can.

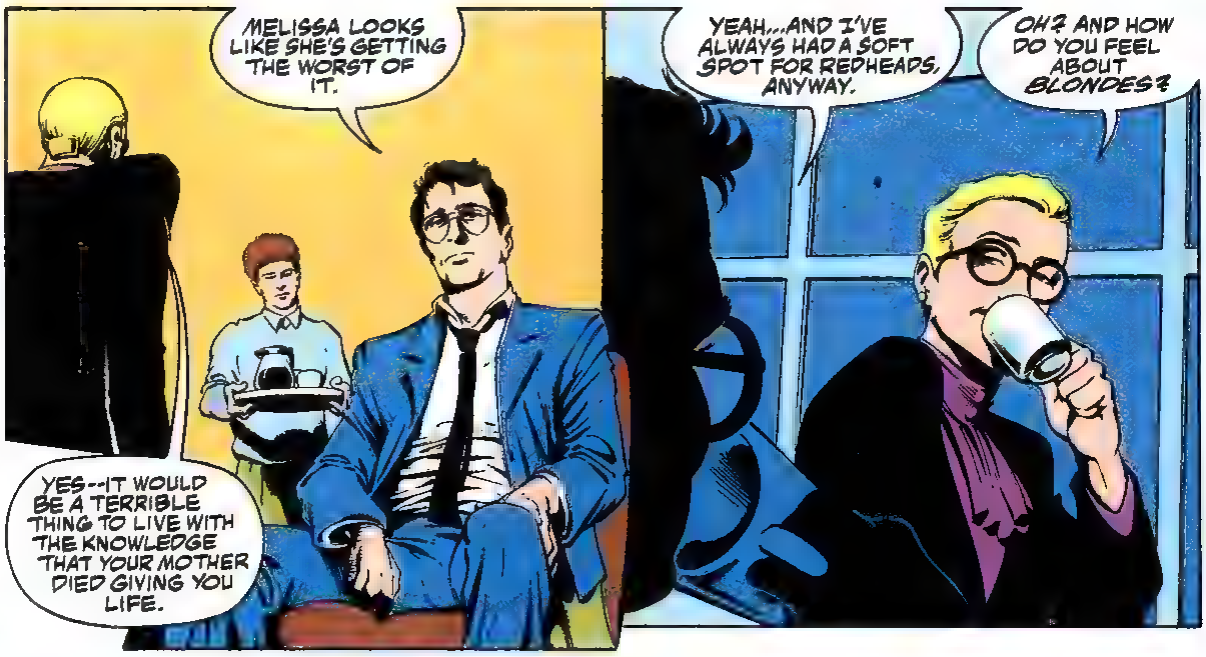
LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS #5
"Merchants In The Sky"
Duck!!

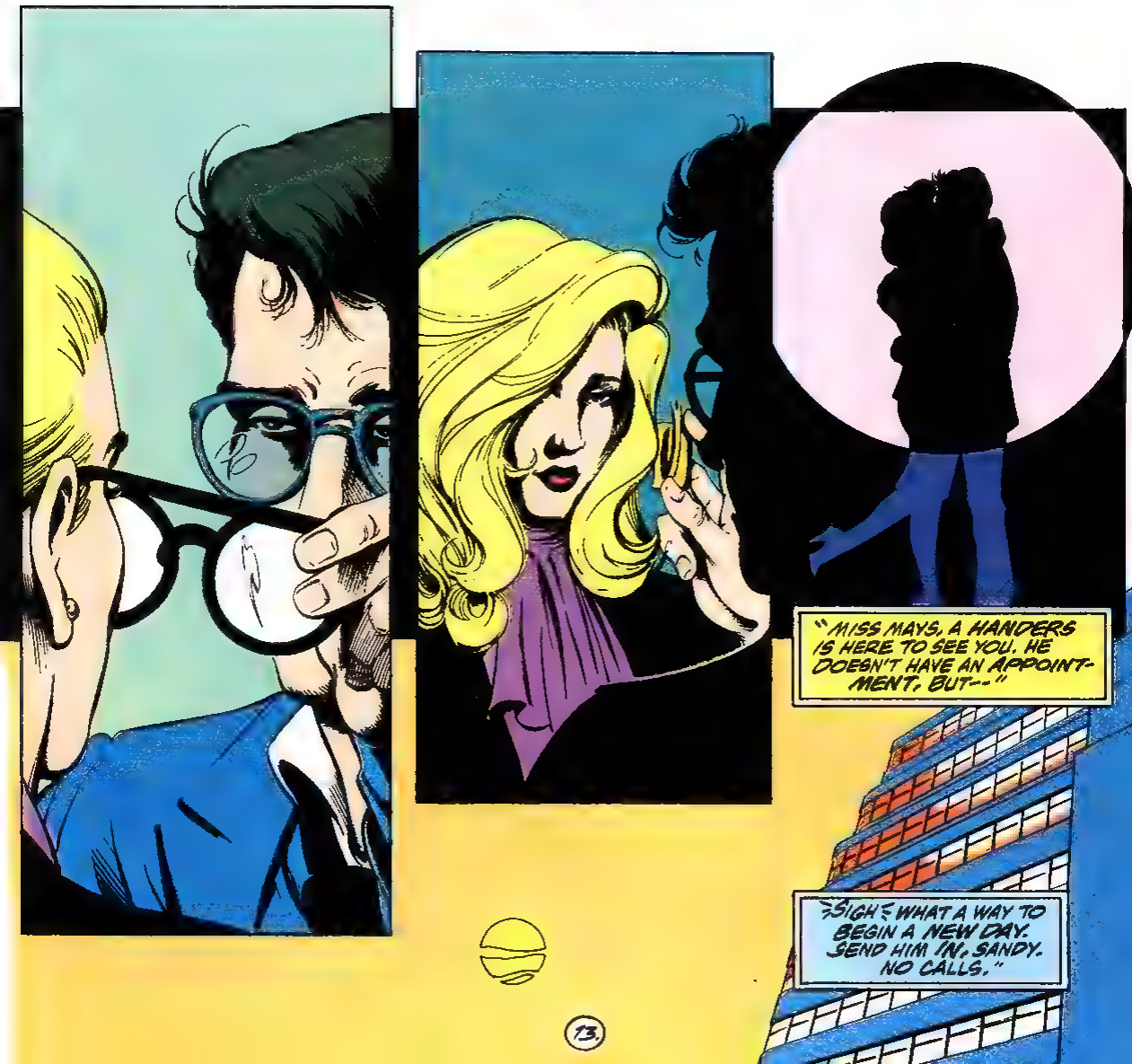
THE JUSTICE MACHINE #1
"Burn While You Learn"
The hottest full-color series premiere around!

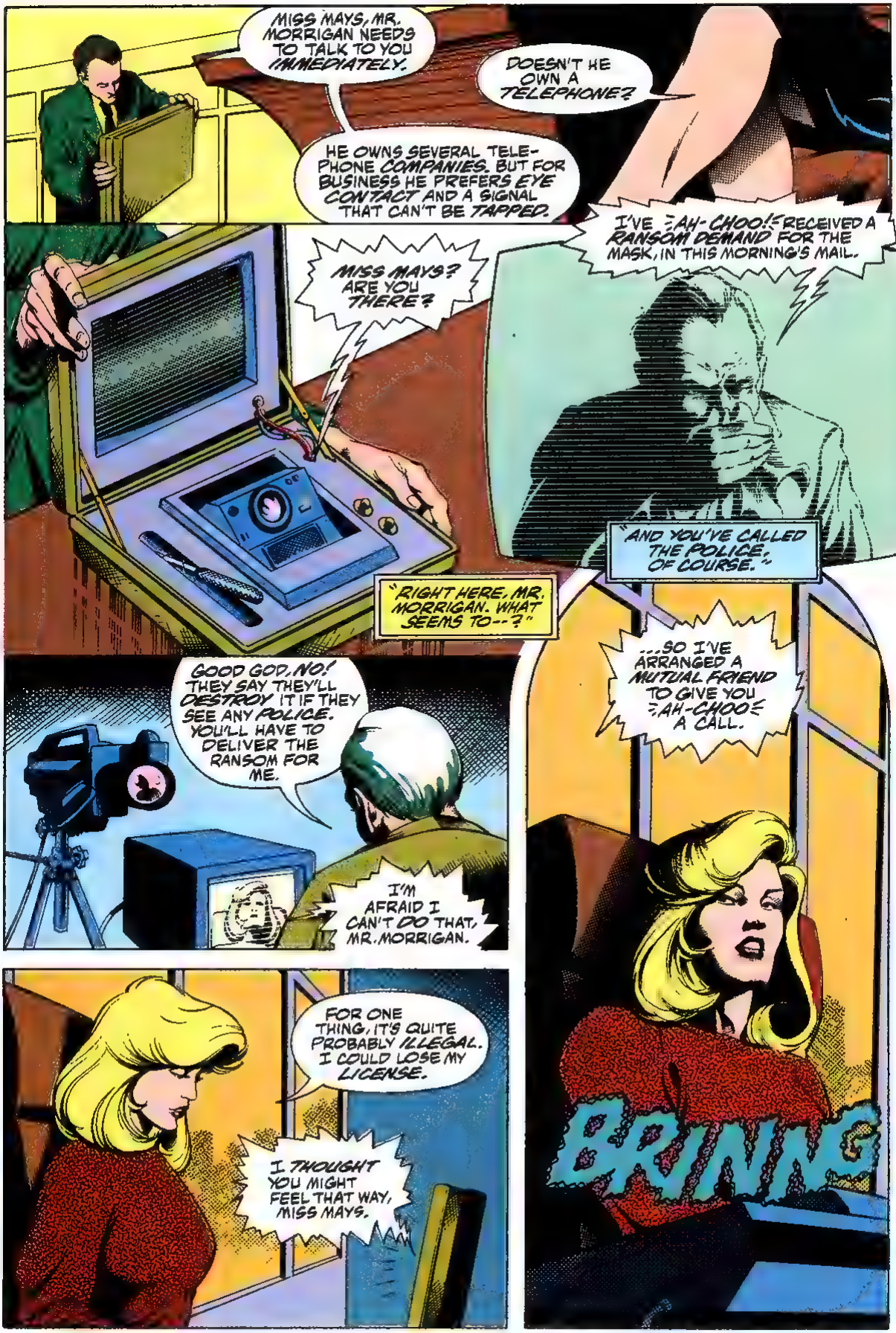
HERO ALLIANCE #5
"Migrations Of The Soul"
Startling, sexy, and sensational!

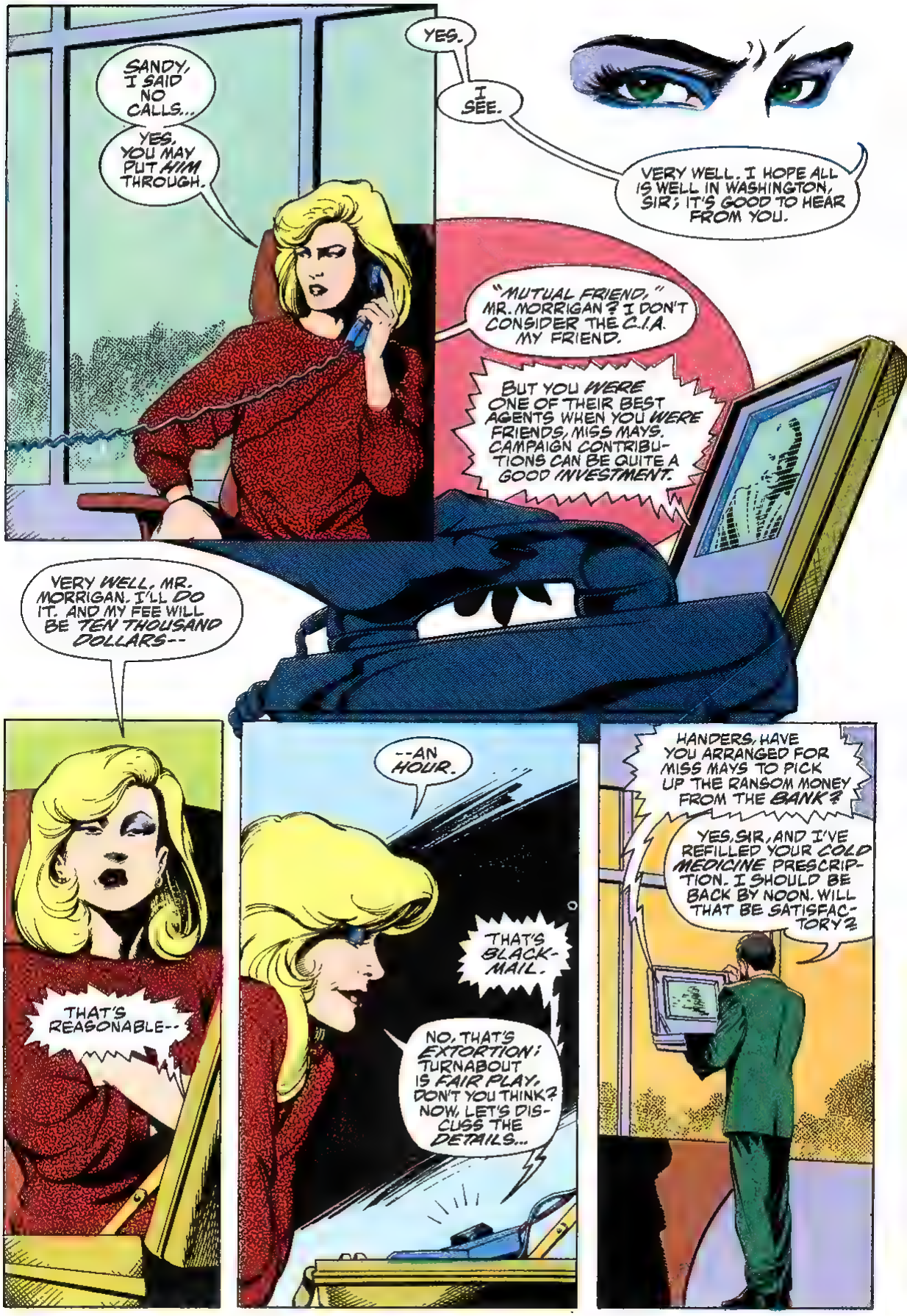
INNOVATION™

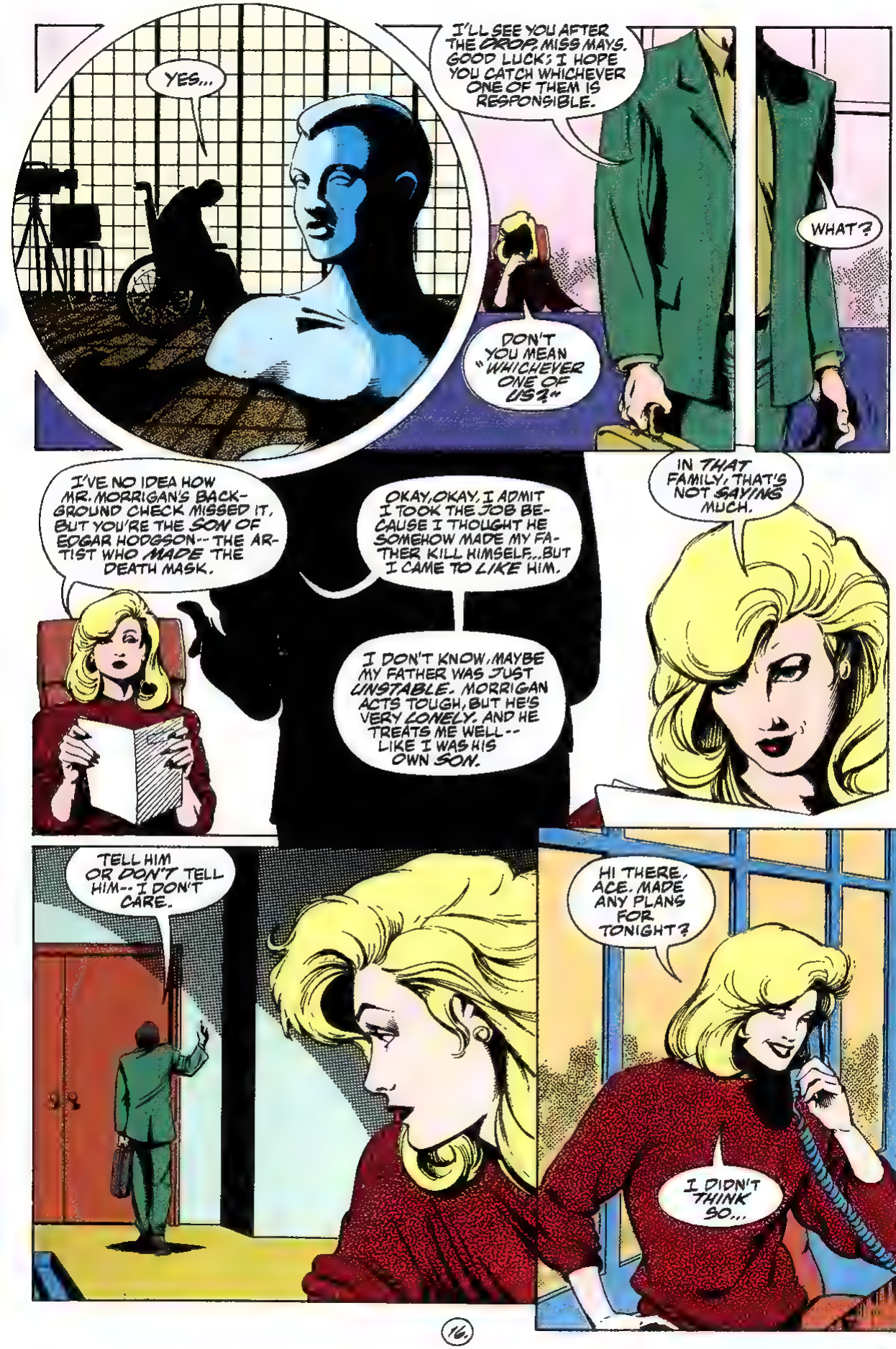
A trio of full-color titles ON SALE NOW!


MELISSA LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GETTING THE WORST OF IT.
YES--IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE THING TO LIVE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOUR MOTHER DIED GIVING YOU LIFE.
YEAH,..AND I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR REDHEADS, ANYWAY.
OH? AND HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BLONDES?


"MISS MAYS, A HANDERS IS HERE TO SEE YOU. HE DOESN'T HAVE AN APPOINTMENT, BUT--"
"SIGH" WHAT A WAY TO BEGIN A NEW DAY. SEND HIM IN, SANDY. NO CALLS."


MISS MAYS, MR. MORRIGAN NEEDS TO TALK TO YOU IMMEDIATELY.
DOESN'T HE OWN A TELEPHONE?
HE OWNS SEVERAL TELEPHONE COMPANIES. BUT FOR BUSINESS HE PREFERS EYE CONTACT AND A SIGNAL THAT CAN'T BE TAPPED.
MISS MAYS? ARE YOU THERE?
I'VE =AH-CHOO!= RECEIVED A RANSOM DEMAND FOR THE MASK, IN THIS MORNING'S MAIL.
"AND YOU'VE CALLED THE POLICE, OF COURSE."
"RIGHT HERE, MR. MORRIGAN. WHAT SEEMS TO--?"
...SO I'VE ARRANGED A MUTUAL FRIEND TO GIVE YOU =AH-CHOO= A CALL.
GOOD GOD, NO! THEY SAY THEY'LL DESTROY IT IF THEY SEE ANY POLICE. YOU'LL HAVE TO DELIVER THE RANSOM FOR ME.
I'M AFRAID I CAN'T DO THAT, MR. MORRIGAN.
BRING
FOR ONE THING, IT'S QUITE PROBABLY ILLEGAL. I COULD LOSE MY LICENSE.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FEEL THAT WAY, MISS MAYS.


SANDY, I SAID NO CALLS...
YES, YOU MAY PUT *HIM* THROUGH.
YES.
I SEE.
VERY WELL. I HOPE ALL IS WELL IN WASHINGTON, SIR; IT'S GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU.
"MUTUAL FRIEND," MR. MORRIGAN? I DON'T CONSIDER THE C.I.A. MY FRIEND.
BUT YOU *WERE* ONE OF THEIR BEST AGENTS WHEN YOU *WERE* FRIENDS, MISS MAYS. CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS CAN BE QUITE A GOOD *INVESTMENT*.
VERY *WELL*, MR. MORRIGAN. I'LL *DO* IT. AND MY FEE WILL BE *TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS*--
THAT'S REASONABLE--
--AN *HOUR*.
THAT'S *BLACK-MAIL*.
NO, THAT'S *EXTORTION*; TURNABOUT IS *FAIR PLAY*, DON'T YOU THINK? NOW, LET'S DISCUSS THE *DETAILS*...
HANDERS, HAVE YOU ARRANGED FOR MISS MAYS TO PICK UP THE RANSOM MONEY FROM THE *BANK*?
YES, SIR, AND I'VE REFILLED YOUR *COLD MEDICINE* PRESCRIPTION. I SHOULD BE BACK BY NOON. WILL THAT BE SATISFACTORY?

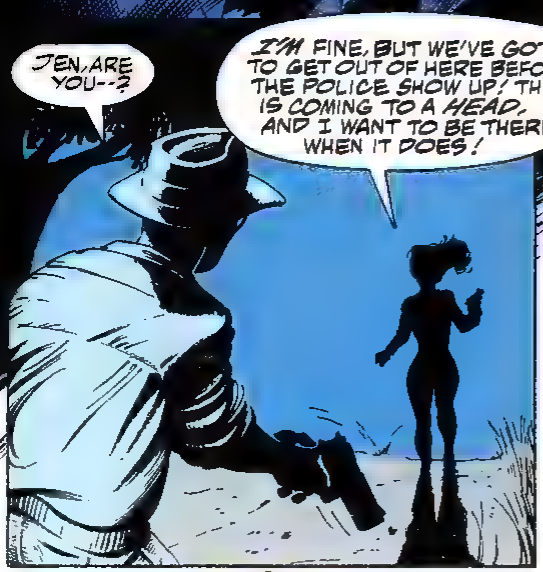

YES...
I'LL SEE YOU AFTER THE DROP, MISS MAYS. GOOD LUCK; I HOPE YOU CATCH WHICHEVER ONE OF THEM IS RESPONSIBLE.
DON'T YOU MEAN "WHICHEVER ONE OF US?"
WHAT?
I'VE NO IDEA HOW MR. MORRIGAN'S BACKGROUND CHECK MISSED IT, BUT YOU'RE THE SON OF EDGAR HODGSON-- THE ARTIST WHO MADE THE DEATH MASK.
OKAY, OKAY, I ADMIT I TOOK THE JOB BECAUSE I THOUGHT HE SOMEHOW MADE MY FATHER KILL HIMSELF... BUT I CAME TO LIKE HIM.
I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE MY FATHER WAS JUST UNSTABLE. MORRIGAN ACTS TOUGH, BUT HE'S VERY LONELY. AND HE TREATS ME WELL-- LIKE I WAS HIS OWN SON.
IN THAT FAMILY, THAT'S NOT SAYING MUCH.
TELL HIM OR DON'T TELL HIM-- I DON'T CARE.
HI THERE, ACE. MADE ANY PLANS FOR TONIGHT?
I DIDN'T THINK SO...

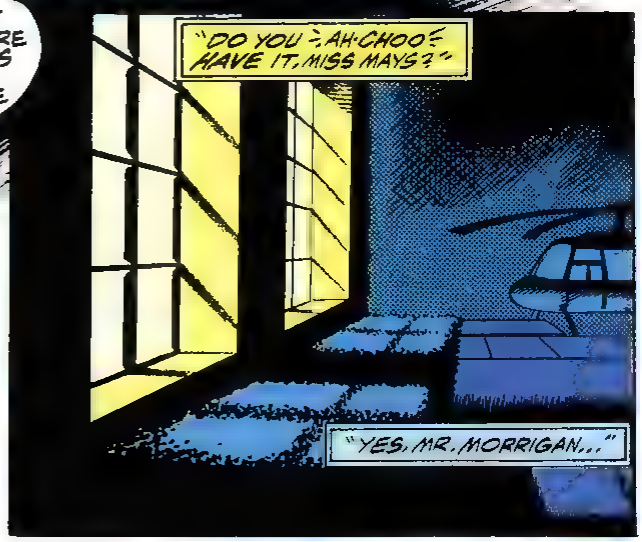
"YOU'RE GOING TO DELIVER THE RANSOM, JEN? SOUNDS DANGEROUS."
"I DON'T THINK SO. THE MASK IS TOO WELL-KNOWN TO SELL, AND THEY KNOW MORRIGAN WANTS IT BACK."
BESIDES, IF IT WERE DANGEROUS, WOULD I HAVE BROUGHT YOU ALONG?
OH, THANKS.
ACTUALLY, YOU'VE GOT THE MAKINGS OF A GOOD OPERATIVE, GABE; SOME PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, COMBINED WITH THAT MIND OF YOURS, AND--
NO THANKS, BABE. TWO PEOPLE IN LOVE SHOULD NEVER WORK TOGETHER.
WHO EVER SAID WE WERE IN LOVE...?
GOD, BE CAREFUL.
UH-HUH.
OOPS, TIME TO GO TO WORK.

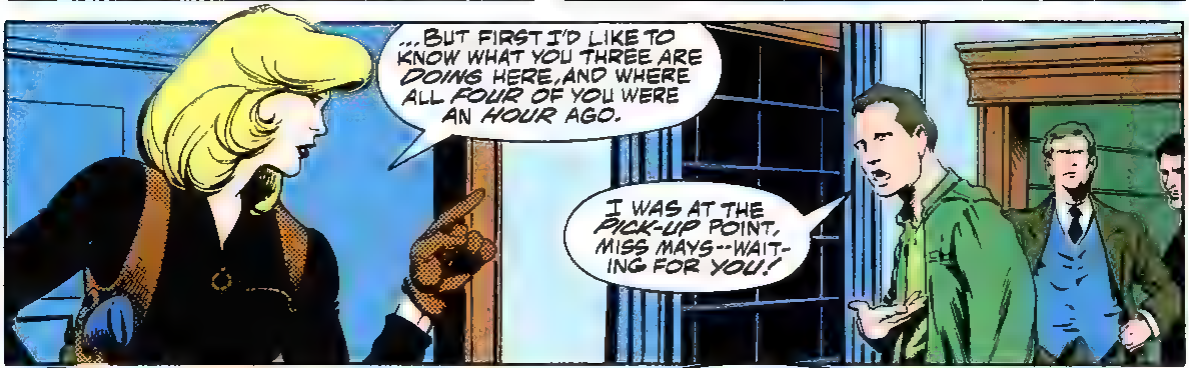
GOT IT?
GOT IT! AND I CAN'T WAIT TO BE RID OF--

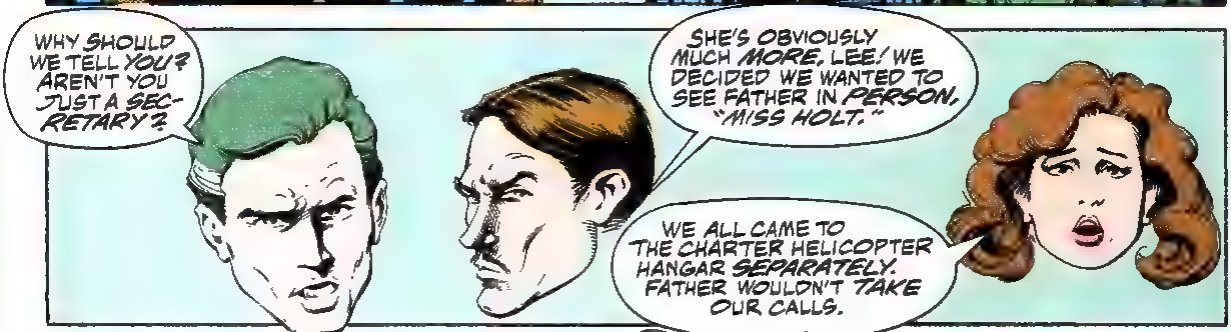
WHAT WAS THAT?
NOTHING GOOD.
CAN YOU HANDLE THIS?
HANDLE IT, SURE! FIRING IT IS ANOTHER--
GABE--!

YOU'RE... YOU'RE NOT--
WHO? THE MAN WHO HIRED YOU? HE MET YOU AND DOUBLE-CROSSED YOU, DIDN'T HE? WHO IS--?


JEN, ARE YOU--?
I'M FINE, BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE POLICE SHOW UP! THIS IS COMING TO A HEAD, AND I WANT TO BE THERE WHEN IT DOES!

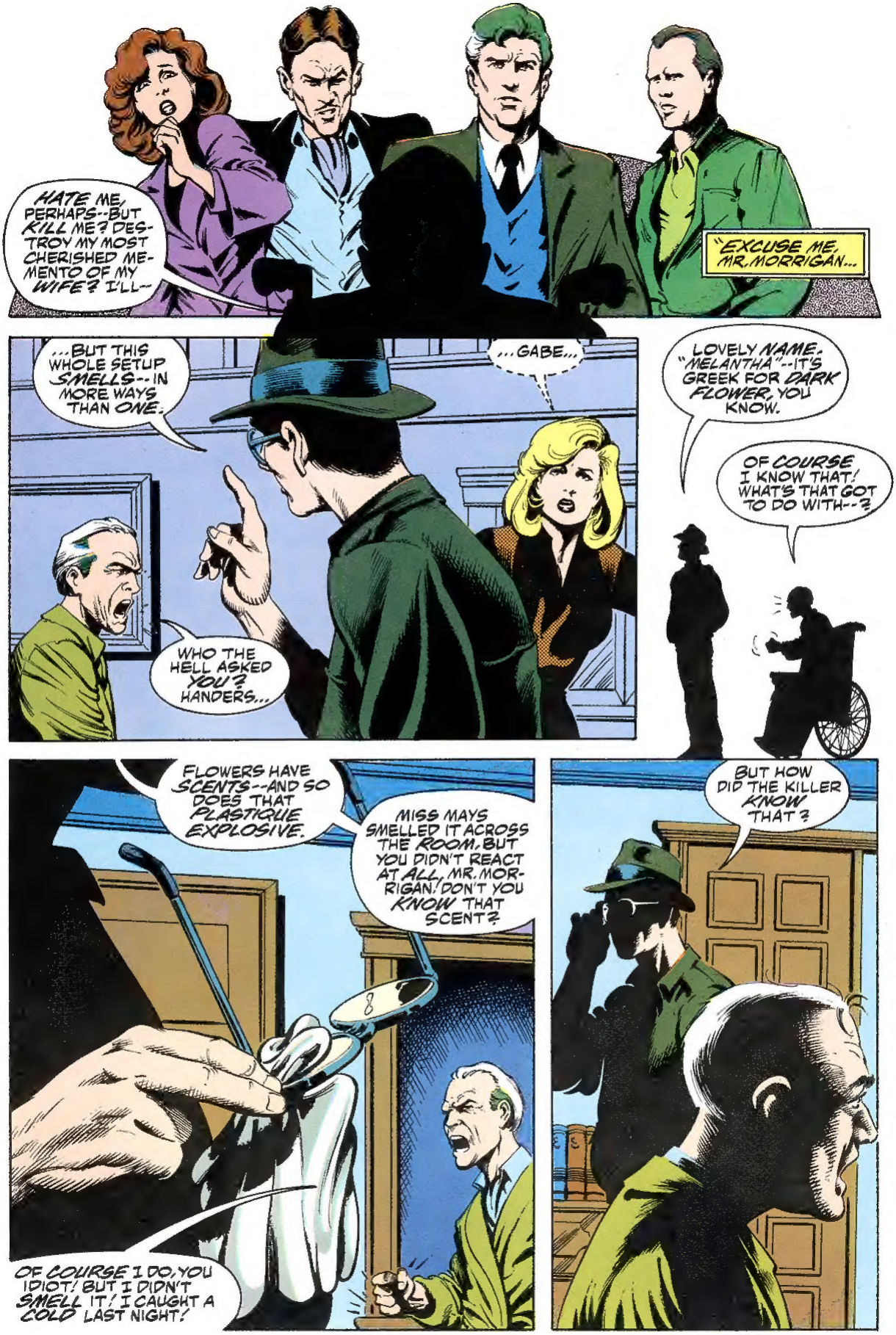

"DO YOU =AH-CHOO= HAVE IT, MISS MAYS?"
"YES, MR. MORRIGAN..."

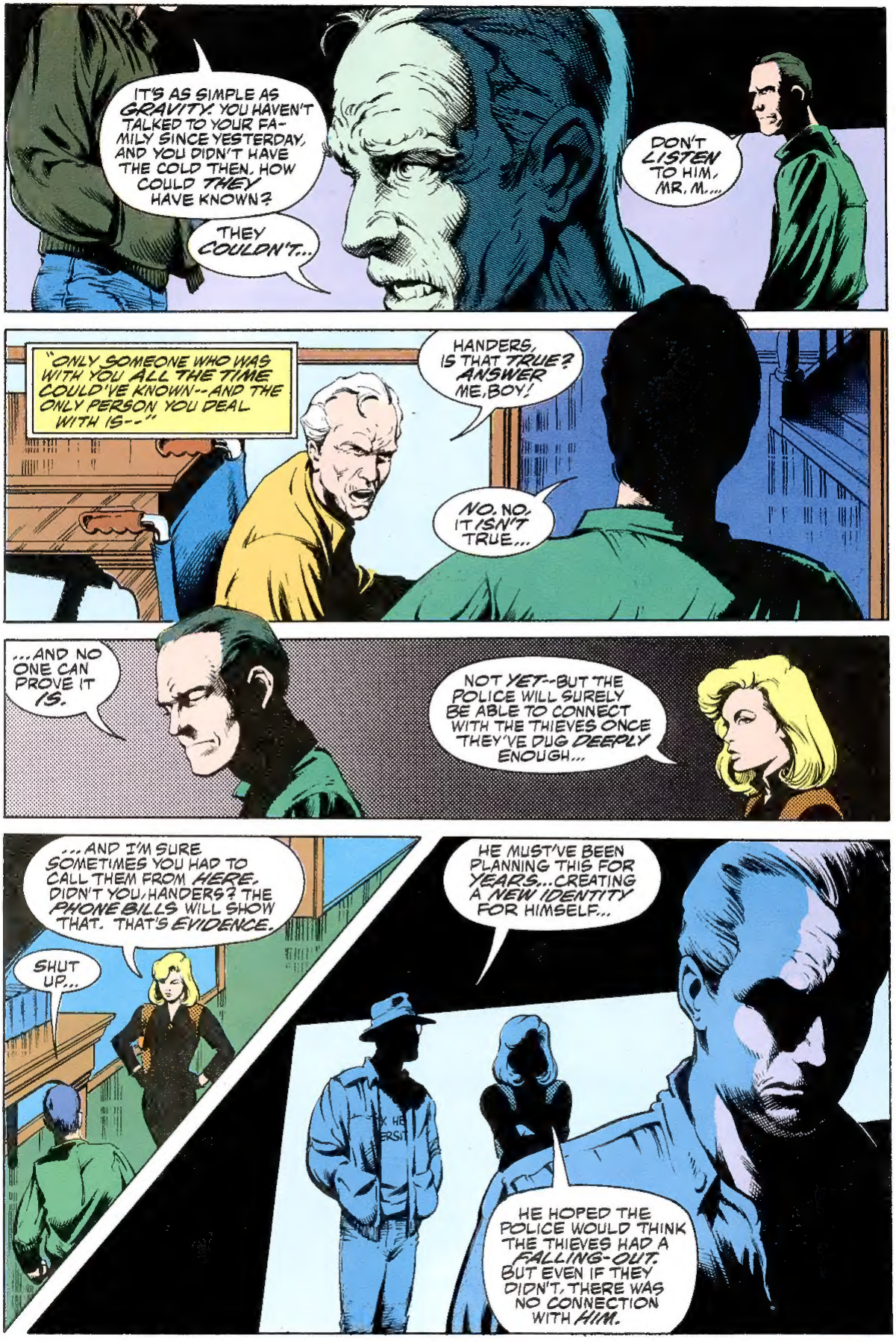

...BUT FIRST I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU THREE ARE DOING HERE, AND WHERE ALL FOUR OF YOU WERE AN HOUR AGO.
I WAS AT THE PICK-UP POINT, MISS MAYS--WAITING FOR YOU!


WHY SHOULD WE TELL YOU? AREN'T YOU JUST A SECRETARY?
SHE'S OBVIOUSLY MUCH MORE, LEE! WE DECIDED WE WANTED TO SEE FATHER IN PERSON, "MISS HOLT."
WE ALL CAME TO THE CHARTER HELICOPTER HANGAR SEPARATELY. FATHER WOULDN'T TAKE OUR CALLS.

I'VE NOT SPOKEN TO THOSE PARASITES SINCE YESTERDAY! GIVE ME THE MASK!
I SUGGEST YOU HAVE THE CASE EXAMINED BEFORE OPENING IT, MR. MORRIGAN! IT MAY BE--
GET AWAY, ALL OF YOU... LET ME ACHOO! OPEN IT IN PEACE...
BY GOD, IT'S HERE.
..MELANTHA...
THAT ODOR..!
SOMETHING WRONG, JEN?
DROP IT!
WHAT--?

NO...
MR. M., ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
...NO...
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
WHEN YOU OPENED THE CASE, I CAUGHT A WHIFF OF BURNT RUBBER. IN THIS CASE, THE ODOR OF PLASTIQUE EXPLOSIVE.
THE DETONATOR MUST HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED WHEN THE THIEF LOCKED THE AIR-TIGHT CASE. I DIDN'T SMELL IT AT THE PICK-UP BECAUSE THERE WAS A BRISK WIND...
...BUT WHAT IT BOILS DOWN TO IS A VERY ELABORATE MURDER ATTEMPT, MR. MORRIGAN.
YOU CAN IN-CLUDE HANDERS IN THAT GROUP, MR. MORRIGAN. HE'S THE SON OF EDGAR HODGSON.
HANDERS--?
THEY ALL HATE YOU, MR. M.! NOT ME!
DAMN YOU! I THOUGHT ONE OF YOU WAS BEHIND THIS, BUT I HAD NO IDEA YOU'D GO THIS FAR!

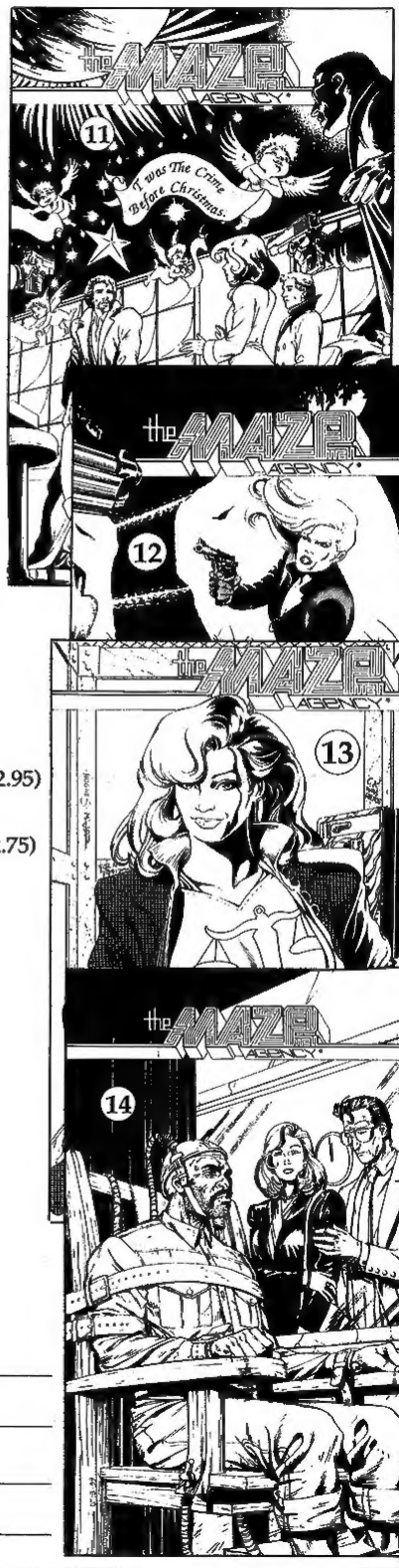

HATE ME, PERHAPS--BUT KILL ME? DESTROY MY MOST CHERISHED MEMENTO OF MY WIFE? I'LL--
"EXCUSE ME, MR. MORRIGAN...
...BUT THIS WHOLE SETUP SMELLS--IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.
...GABE...
WHO THE HELL ASKED YOU? HANDERS...
LOVELY NAME, "MELANTHA"--IT'S GREEK FOR DARK FLOWER, YOU KNOW.
OF COURSE I KNOW THAT! WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH--?
FLOWERS HAVE SCENTS--AND SO DOES THAT PLASTIQUE EXPLOSIVE.
MISS MAYS SMELLED IT ACROSS THE ROOM, BUT YOU DIDN'T REACT AT ALL, MR. MORRIGAN! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT SCENT?
OF COURSE I DO, YOU IDIOT! BUT I DIDN'T SMELL IT! I CAUGHT A COLD LAST NIGHT!
BUT HOW DID THE KILLER KNOW THAT?


IT'S AS SIMPLE AS GRAVITY. YOU HAVEN'T TALKED TO YOUR FAMILY SINCE YESTERDAY, AND YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE COLD THEN. HOW COULD THEY HAVE KNOWN?
THEY COULDN'T...
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, MR. M....
"ONLY SOMEONE WHO WAS WITH YOU ALL THE TIME COULD'VE KNOWN--AND THE ONLY PERSON YOU DEAL WITH IS--"
HANDERS, IS THAT TRUE? ANSWER ME, BOY!
NO. NO, IT ISN'T TRUE...
...AND NO ONE CAN PROVE IT IS.
NOT YET--BUT THE POLICE WILL SURELY BE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH THE THIEVES ONCE THEY'VE DUG DEEPLY ENOUGH...
...AND I'M SURE SOMETIMES YOU HAD TO CALL THEM FROM HERE. DIDN'T YOU, HANDERS? THE PHONE BILLS WILL SHOW THAT. THAT'S EVIDENCE.
SHUT UP...
HE MUST'VE BEEN PLANNING THIS FOR YEARS...CREATING A NEW IDENTITY FOR HIMSELF...
HE HOPED THE POLICE WOULD THINK THE THIEVES HAD A FALLING-OUT. BUT EVEN IF THEY DIDN'T, THERE WAS NO CONNECTION WITH HIM.

HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT MORRIGAN SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS FATHER'S SUICIDE...
...AND THE FAMILIAL HATRED MADE A PERFECT BLIND.
STOP IT...!
YOU STOP, HANDERS. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STARTED IT.
WOULDN'T YOU? IF HE'D KILLED YOUR FATHER?
YOU EARNED YOUR FEE, MISS MAYS.
I TRY, MR. MORRIGAN. SHALL I HAVE THE AIRPORT SEND THE HELICOPTER BACK TONIGHT?
IT CAN WAIT UNTIL THE MORNING. MY CHILDREN ARE STAYING HERE TONIGHT...
...WE HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO TALK ABOUT...
TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS AN HOUR, HUH? WHAT'S MY CUT OF THAT?
WELL THEN, THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS PAY FOR BREAKFAST.
YOUR CUT? WHAT HAPPENED TO "BUSINESS AND ROMANCE DON'T MIX"?
NO PROMISES.
End

Journey Into Mystery With The Most Dazzling Detective Duo In Comics!

THE MAZE AGENCY --
A full-color monthly series!
Written by Mike W. Barr
Art by Adam Hughes,
Robb Phipps, Rick Magyar
& more!
Covers by Alan Davis,
Adam Hughes, Paul Smith
& more!



MAZE BOOK --
THE MAZE AGENCY COLLECTION #1
Four sensational stories by
Mike Barr & Adam Hughes
Plus a comic book crime:
"Murder In Mint Condition!"
And new art by Adam Hughes
132 pages/Available now!

Use this coupon or a photocopy.
Send orders and make check or money order payable to:

INNOVATION PUBLISHING
Subscription Department
3622 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

- ❑ ***MAZE BOOK: THE MAZE AGENCY COLLECTION #1*** ($12.95)
- ❑ ***THE MAZE AGENCY #9*** -- Guest-starring Ellery Queen! ($2.75)
- ❑ ***THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL #1*** ($3.50)
- ❑ PLEASE SEND ME THE LATEST ISSUE OF ***THE MAZE AGENCY***! ($2.50)
- ❑ I WANT TO SUBSCRIBE FOR 6 INNOVATION ISSUES OF ***THE MAZE AGENCY***! PLEASE BEGIN MY SUB WITH ISSUE # ___ ($15.00)

TOTAL ENCLOSED $_____

All prices include shipping and handling. U.S. funds only.
Please allow 4 weeks for delivery.

Send to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____ Phone _____